

SPRING FLAP 2004



The FLAP

News for the Folks of Lake Accotink Park
703-569-3464 www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink/



Spring Symphony

A sure sign that spring is on its way is the distinctive "peep peep peep" call of the aptly named spring peeper. Many of these frogs calling together may sound like the jingling of sleigh bells.

The spring peeper is a chorus frog, a type of tree frog. You may be surprised to learn that this frog with a loud call is only about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch to $1\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch long. This makes it about the size of a nickel and thus very difficult to see when it is hiding in tall grass and brush along puddles and roadside ditches. If you are lucky enough to see one, it is easily identified by its smooth brownish green skin and characteristic "X" mark on its back, which allow it to easily blend in with its surroundings. Spring peepers also have round sticky pads on their toes, which enable them to climb trees, though they rarely climb more than above knee level.

Spring peepers begin to emerge from their long winter hibernation under leaves, dirt and other debris between February and March when the ground begins to thaw and spring rains have begun. Spring peepers are attracted to puddles and pools of water to mate and lay their eggs. Peepers especially like wooded ponds

and puddles that are surrounded by shrubs and have many branches and tall grasses in the water. Often, these puddles are formed by spring rainfall and snowmelt and will disappear by early summer. Male peepers sit on grass stalks or twigs to emit their call, one peep approximately every second, in hopes of attracting a female.



Female spring peepers lay eggs, as many as 1000 at one time, from March through May. After fertilization they attach their eggs, which are smaller than a grain of rice, to sticks and brush in the same pool where they mated. Tadpoles hatch from these eggs in less than a week. The tadpoles will eat the algae and detritus, dead plant matter, found in their puddle. Soon after, they will begin a process called metamorphosis, and look like full grown frogs.

They will then eat small spiders, larvae, and worms. In turn, they

will have to avoid being eaten by birds, fish, raccoons, possums, and snakes.

Spring peepers, like all frogs, are an important component of the natural environment. They serve as an important food source for many different animals. Their health and population numbers are indicators of the overall health of the environment as they live in both water and land habitats and so are sensitive to changes in each.

They can absorb pollutants and pesticides through their skin in the water, which can kill them and cause a population decline or cause visible abnormalities in the frog's body. An animal which eats a poisoned frog may also become sick. Frogs have also been shown to be affected by increased UV radiation from the thinning of the ozone layer in addition to droughts, and loss of habitat. Because of this number of sensitivities, frog populations are closely monitored by scientists and environmentalists. A symphony of spring peepers on a warm night is a sign that the environment in your area is healthy!



Have You Caught the Big News?!

Spring trout season is in full swing at Lake Accotink Park and Lake Fairfax Park. The season runs through Sunday April 25th. Lake Accotink Park plans to stock bi-weekly, but if pass sales and attendance are high, stocking may occur weekly. This year season pass prices have been reduced to \$20 for those between

the ages of 16 and 59 and \$18 for those aged 60 and older as well as children between the ages of 11 and 16. Daily passes are \$10 and \$9 for the same age groups. Children under the age of 11 fish free with a paying adult. Passes are good at either park. A season pass will pay for itself with

only two fishing trips!

Many of you will notice some basic changes to the program. In addition to the reduced season pass prices, multiple day punch passes have been eliminated from the program. Also, fishing will start the first day

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Have You Caught the Big News?!

(Have You Caught the Big News?! continued from page 1)

the creek is stocked. These changes are part of an effort to protect the value and integrity of the program and encourage more people to come to the park to fish.

Lake Accotink Park is proud to be able to offer trout fishing in a natural setting tucked in an urban environment. However, the fall stocking program was cancelled due to a decline in attendance. This program is funded entirely by the revenue generated by pass sales. Your purchase of a season pass will help ensure that the trout stocking program will continue!



Lake Accotink Park will stock fighting rainbow trout from February 27 through April 25. Please pay before fishing.

Get your bait and tackle here!

Lake Accotink Park sells bait and tackle at the main office, which is the first left off the main access road. Tackle available includes stingers, swivels, fishing line, hooks in several sizes, sinkers, bobbers, and landing nets.

Lake Accotink will also sell the very popular Powerbait again this year. It is available in a range of colors including chartreuse, pink, rainbow, spring green, white and yellow. Many of these colors have also been stocked in the nugget form. Trout worms, fuzzy jigs, and night crawlers will also be available.

Trout anglers report the most success with white, rainbow, and spring green Powerbait. Success has also been reported with white, yellow, and fluorescent orange trout worms and white or black fuzzy jigs.

Check-It-Out:

Catch up with the new and exciting things going on at Lake Accotink Park!

Have you noticed.... A new occupant has taken up residence atop the marina building which houses Lake Accotink's boat house and snack bar. On your next visit to the park, you might glance upwards and notice the refurbished cupola topped with a new weathervane bearing the likeness of a great blue heron. The heron gazes majestically out over the lake, as if to beckon visitors to take note and appreciate the natural splendor in our midst. The addition of the weathervane came as a result of work done over the winter to repair the cupola, which was broken and deteriorated to the point that birds had left nests in it. Maintenance supervisor Ed Miller spent hours painstakingly removing old, dull paint that masked the copper roof, and applied his expert woodworking skills to rebuild the sides. We are fortunate to have staff of many talents working at Lake Accotink Park.

Come on inside... Learn about the history of Lake Accotink and get close up with the many interesting natural and historic artifacts on display in Lake Accotink Park's Visitors Center. Recent additions to this inspiring exhibit, which opened last October, include minie balls and grape shot donated by the family of Mr. Wallace Allison. Artifacts such as these enable us to more fully interpret the Civil War-era history of Lake Accotink Park. We are also adding interpretive literature to our animal exhibit. Stop by the Visitors Center to learn how railroads and rifles were technological advances that made the Civil War America's first modern war. Also find out why snakes are important components of any natural environment.

Know your watershed... And learn how to protect it. Recently, park staff produced a brochure about the Accotink Creek Watershed as part

of the park's environmental education efforts. The brochure describes the pressures on the watershed caused by dense urban development within the watershed area. Heavy siltation of Lake Accotink is caused by sediment-laden runoff that moves rapidly along paved surfaces and into storm drains. Water and debris entering storm drains end up in streams; those streams that flow into Lake Accotink carry trash, debris, and large amounts of sediment into the lake. Periodic dredging of the lake is required in order to remove sediment build-up and thereby maintain adequate water depths for the survival of aquatic species and to support recreational pursuits. The brochure discusses this topic and offers tips for reducing negative impacts on the watershed by making simple changes in the way we go about ordinary tasks such as washing cars, walking the dog, or maintaining our lawns. On your next visit to the park, be sure to pick up copies of the Accotink Creek Watershed brochure and share with your neighbors.

Go online... And visit Lake Accotink Park where ever you access the internet. Our home page features a real-time video image of the lake, so you can check conditions or just indulge in a momentary escape into the natural world. Just bookmark our site, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink and visit anytime! You can also download this and past issues of the FLAP; learn about upcoming events; and much more.

Meet Julie!



Julie Tahan is the assistant manager at Lake Accotink Park. She lives in the Lynbrook subdivision with her husband, two children, and Ginger, their German pointer. They have owned their home on Floyd Avenue since 1992.

Julie grew up in Towson, MD as one of five children. Julie obtained a bachelor of science degree at the University of Maryland Baltimore County with a major in Modern Languages and Linguistics. Despite this focus, however, she studied a variety of subjects encompassing the sciences and humanities, which appealed to her desire to learn about and work in a number of subjects and fields. This interest is evident in her career choices. She worked for the Red Cross from 1986 until 2001 and then successfully transitioned to a new career with the Fairfax County Park Authority. Her role as assistant manager satisfies her penchant for variety as well as her deep desire to make positive contributions to her community. The 2-mile commute has made a tremendous difference as well. "My quality of life has greatly improved since taking on this new career challenge. I am always learning something new and I derive great satisfaction from seeing everyone out enjoying the park and spending quality time together.

As assistant manager, Julie's responsibilities include managing business operations, interacting with patrons, representing the park in the community, and planning and promoting special events and programs.

Bilingual

Summer Help Wanted!

Lake Accotink Park is looking for responsible individuals to work at the marina this summer. A typical day may include renting boats and explaining how to use life jackets, running the carousel and miniature golf ticket booth, working at the snack bar and cleaning and maintaining facilities. The successful applicant will possess good people skills, be able to follow directions, and be flexible.

Lake Accotink Park would like to hire a diverse staff who can speak a variety of languages to better serve our community.

Please call the main office at 703-569-3464 or TTY 703-569-5200 for information on filling out an application.



Are You My Mother?

Fairfax County Parks are wonderful places to observe wildlife and with the seasons transitioning to spring, we will begin to see baby animals in the park. It is important to remember, cute as these animals may be, they cannot be picked up, petted, or fed. Animals of all kinds are protected by Fairfax County law from being harassed, injured, and killed on park property. This includes being touched.

Even if the parent animal cannot be seen, it is safe to assume that it is somewhere nearby. Picking up or moving its young may frighten the parent away and it may not return or it may not be able to find its baby again. Also, touching an animal's young may give the baby animal a human scent and create confusion with the parent



Baby squirrels sleep in their nest.

animal. Often young animals may look helpless, but they are very capable of taking care of themselves.

It is alright to return a fallen baby bird to its nest because most birds have a poor sense of

smell, but it is important not to linger so the parent will return and feed it.

Animals should not be fed because human food is not part of their natural diet and is thus unhealthy. If an animal loses its ability to forage for food for itself, it will starve during the following winter when no one is around to give it scraps. If it is known that a young animal's parents have been killed and it has become abandoned, please notify a park employee.

Together we can help keep the park safe and enjoyable for everyone, including the wildlife.



Thanks for Asking!

A new FLAP column featuring questions from those who enjoy Lake Accotink Park

Question: *Can dogs swim in the lake?*

This is a question Lake Accotink Park staff is asked frequently. However, the answer is not a yes or no answer. Ultimately it is a matter of your discretion. Yes, your dog can swim in the lake, but it must be on a lead, under your control and it cannot chase or harass the waterfowl. Some dogs will swim after the geese and ducks, which is a problem because all park wildlife is protected from harassment and injury under County law. You will also need to pick up after your dog. The cumulative effect from not picking up dog waste can be great.

Another issue to be aware of is the lake water is storm water run off and can contain anything that washes off the street, gutters, parking lots and lawns. Although the water in the lake is tested monthly by the Health Department, it is no different than any other lake in an urban environment.

If you do allow your dog into the lake, give him a good bath afterwards. A young dog or puppy should not be allowed to play in the lake. Puppies and young dogs are easily susceptible to disease. Until the dog has had all of his inoculations and vaccinations, a park would probably not be the best place for him to play because of the exposure to so many animals.

There are also logs, branches, trees and man made debris in the water that are sometimes submerged and could cause injury if a dog jumped into the water on top of them. For this reason, it is best to make sure you can control your dog's play.

One other important thing to keep in mind is the park does have copperhead snakes. While these snakes are not aggressive, they will bite if threatened. Their venom can kill a dog or make it very ill.

Keeping your dog on a lead will help protect him from injury both in and out of the water.

Please consider our puppy kindergarten or dog obedience classes that we offer at the park in the spring, summer and fall. We also offer a dog care camp for children in the summer and pet first aid and CPR classes year round. If you are interested, please call 703-569-3464 or check Parktakes magazine for more information. And, as always, thanks for asking!



Lake Accotink Park Wants **YOU!**

Lake Accotink Park kicked off its new Trail Watch volunteer program on Sunday February 8th. Park staff was pleased with the turnout of some very committed volunteers. It will be a relief for many to know that even though we have a very safe park, these individuals are helping out as "eyes and ears" and reporting potential problems and maintenance issues. However, Lake Accotink Park still needs you!

If you or someone you know hikes, bikes, jogs, or walks through the park and would like to help out or would like more informa-

tion, please call the park main office at 703-569-3464 or TTY 703-569-5200.

The Trail Watch Program is a very flexible program and volunteers can participate in it one of two ways. One way is more structured. You would pick a day and time and stop by the main office to sign in, pick up a two-way radio and a supply pack. After you return, you would sign out, return the supplies, and fill out a Trail Watch log with your observations.

The second way is far less structured and

does not ask you to do anything differently other than go about your usual activities from any point in the park, pay special attention to potentially hazardous activities, maintenance, or safety issues, and then call the main office to report your observations.

We only ask that both types of volunteers attend an orientation, so that we can keep a record of volunteers and provide you with information about the program, park rules and regulations, and natural and cultural resources.

Dredging Update

As many of you know, Lake Accotink needs to be dredged and many are anxiously waiting the completion of this project. Since it was built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1918, it has faced serious siltation problems. As much as 30.5 square miles of watershed drain into the lake bringing with it trash, sand from the roads, and silt from eroding stream banks. The good news is that Lake Accotink traps a lot of this silt before it reaches the Chesapeake Bay. The bad news is that Lake Accotink is rapidly filling in.

The Fairfax County Park Authority is very much aware of the situation and the need for dredging Lake Accotink. However, the bids from companies desiring the contract to dredge the lake unfortunately proved to be unacceptable. Thus the Fairfax County Park Authority is reviewing its options.

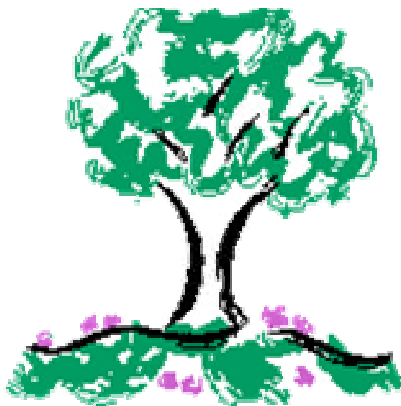


Lake Accotink has faced siltation issues since 1918. It must be dredged every few decades to maintain a reasonable depth.

Dredging the lake is an important project. The lake is an important natural environment for many species of plants and animals as well as a recreational treasure. Dredging is an expensive project. As such, it is necessary that the job be done well and so the best contractor possible needs to be chosen. A new timeline for completion of this project is underway.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Lake Accotink Park dredging project, please contact us at 703-569-0285.

Lake Accotink Park Annual Spring Cleanup Day Saturday March 20



When?: Saturday March 20

9 am–5 pm

Where?: Meet at Lake Accotink Park marina

Why?: To help clean up Accotink Creek, the park and surrounding area and to make it more enjoyable to visitors and safer for wildlife

Who should come?: This is a perfect event for scout, community service groups, and of course, for families and those wanting to make a difference in their community

Dress for the weather and wear shoes that can get dirty

Lunch will be provided

**FAIRFAX COUNTY
PARK AUTHORITY**

Lake Accotink Park
7500 Accotink Park Road
Springfield VA 22150

Phone: 703-569-0285

Fax: 703-913-1298

TTY number: 703-569-5200

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink

Park Management:

Tawny Hammond, Park Manager

Julie Tahan, Assistant Manager

Lee Ann Shenefiel, Operations Manager

Axel Boy, Evening Supervisor

Ed Miller, Grounds Supervisor

For FLAP comments or suggestions, please email:

Tawny.Hammond@fairfaxcounty.gov

ADA Accommodations: Fairfax County is committed to giving all citizens equal access to recreation and leisure opportunities. In keeping with that policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals with disabilities in all Park Authority programs, services, and facilities. ADA accommodations include sign interpreters, alternative information formats, program modifications and inclusion support. Contact the ADA Specialist at 703-324-8563 or (TTY) (703)803-3354 for additional information.



Calendar of Events:

Advance registration is required. Please call 703-569-3464 or TTY 703-569-5200.

Nature Night Hike (Ages 7 & Up)

Join us for an evening stroll under a full moon as we try to encounter some of the “nightlife” in Lake Accotink Park. Participants will learn about nocturnal activities of the forest inhabitants.

\$5 per adult and \$3 for children under age 16.

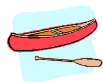
Hikes are from 7:30 to 9pm



Dates: Friday March 5, Saturday March 6, Friday April 2, Saturday April 3, Friday April 30, Saturday May 1

Can You Canoe? (Ages 8 years to adult)

You will learn the basic mechanics of canoeing with emphasis on safety and enjoyment. Equipment provided; bring a water bottle. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult.



\$16 per participant

Class runs from 3-5 pm

Dates: Saturday April 17, Saturday May 15, Saturday June 19

Fly Fishing Workshop (14 years & up)

In this one-day class, you'll learn the equipment and flies to us plus how to cast a fly line. Bring a lunch and a beverage. All equipment is furnished.

\$119 per participant

Class runs from 8:30am-3:30pm

Dates: Saturday April 24, Saturday May 1, Saturday May 8



Go Fish! Introduction to Fishing for Kids (6 to 12 years)

Learn fishing techniques and practices for including knot tying, tackle use, etiquettes and more. Poles and tackle are provided.

\$10 per participant. Fee waived for trout season pass holders

Classes are from 2-4 pm

Dates: Sunday February 29, Saturday April 10



Calendar of Events (continued)

Sunset Cruise (Adults only)

Admire the sunset and relax as you cruise the beautiful shoreline of Lake Accotink. An interpretive history of Lake Accotink park and the area is included.

\$5 per participant

Boat leaves dock 30 minutes before sunset

Dates: Saturday April 24, Saturday May 22



Dog Day Afternoon (Humans ages 8 & up; dogs all ages)

Treat your canine companion to a special cruise aboard Lake Accotink Park's pontoon boat.

\$5 per adults, \$3 per children under 16; One dog per adult



Cruise runs from 2-3 pm

Dates: Sunday March 14

Specialty Events:

Mother's Day Cruise

Cruise the shoreline while listening to an interpretive history of the park, lake and surrounding area.

\$3.50 for Moms, \$7 for other adults, \$4 for children

Sunday, May 9

Cruises leave at 11 am, 1 pm, 3 pm, 5 pm, 6 pm



Spring Egg Hunt

Children hunt for treat filled eggs and win special prizes. Bring your own basket. Fee includes Egg Hunt and digital photo with the Bunny.



\$6 per child

Saturday April 3

3 years and under at 10am, 4-6 years at 11am mixed ages at noon

Spring Bonnet Contest, Parade, and Bone Hunt for Dogs

Dress your furry family member in their finest bonnets for a parade. After the judging, take them for a hunt for treats in the bone yard and stop by for a visit with the bunny. Fee includes parade, bone hunt, and a digital photo with the Bunny.

\$6 per dog

Saturday April 3

2pm



Cardboard Boat-Building Workshop

Get ready for the 15th annual Cardboard Boat Regatta, set for Sunday, June 6. Bring family, friends, duct tape, utility knife, scissors, cardboard, knee pads, pencils, markers, brilliant ideas and patience.

\$7 per person, \$3.50 per person in groups of 5 or more



Saturday May 1

10am-noon
